

# Take the Field Plant Cover Crops

## Maryland's 2014-2015 Cover Crop Sign-up

Open enrollment runs June 24 through July 15 at soil conservation district offices

### 2014-2015 COVER CROP HIGHLIGHTS

-  Pays up to \$100/acre to plant traditional cover crops
-  Harvested cover crops qualify for \$25/acre; \$35/acre if rye is used as the cover crop
-  **New this year:** Farmers may mix any two approved cover crop species at a rate of 60/40 to create diversity
-  Farmers select harvest acres in spring
-  No acreage caps
-  One application for both traditional and harvested cover crop programs

Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program  
2014-2015 Cover Crop Sign-Up

June 24 through July 15, 2014 at  
soil conservation district offices



Maryland  
Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

Conservation Grants Program  
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, MD 21401



Martin O'Malley  
Governor

Anthony G. Brown  
Lt. Governor

Earl F. Hance  
Secretary

Mary Ellen Setting  
Deputy Secretary

### SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3
Catoctin	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3
Charles	301-934-9588, ext. 3
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Garrett	301-334-6950, ext. 3

Harford	410-838-6181, ext. 3
Howard	410-489-7987
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3
Montgomery	301-590-2855
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3
Somerset	410-651-1575, ext. 3
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 3
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3

THE MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY COST-SHARE PROGRAM

# COVER CROPS





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### WHY PLANT COVER CROPS?

Cover crops provide a triple play for farmers who want to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and increase the productivity of their farmland. In the fall, cold-hardy cereal grains and brassicas are planted as cover crops in newly harvested fields. As they grow, cover crops recycle unused plant nutrients remaining in the soil from the previous summer crop, protect fields against wind and water erosion, and improve the soil for next year's crop.

Maryland's nutrient management regulations require farmers to plant cover crops when organic nutrient sources are applied to fields in fall. In addition to their water quality benefits, cover crops improve soil health and water retention, increase organic matter in the soil, reduce weeds and pests, and provide habitat for beneficial insects.

### GRANTS FOR FARMERS

The Maryland Agricultural Water-Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program provides grants to help farmers offset seed, labor and equipment costs associated with planting cover crops. This year, Maryland has earmarked approximately \$20 million for the cover crop program. There are two ways to participate. Farmers who plant traditional cover crops receive a base rate of \$45/acre and up to \$55/acre in add-on incentives for using highly valued planting practices. Harvested cover crops qualify for \$25/acre with a bonus payment of \$10/acre if rye is used exclusively as the cover crop. Other restrictions apply.

### SIGN-UP DATES

June 24 – July 15, 2014 at soil conservation district offices statewide.

### GUIDELINES AND CONDITIONS

- Cover crops may be planted after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco or vegetables are harvested.
- There is a five acre minimum, but no acreage caps.
- Plant by November 5, 2014. Early planting incentives are offered.
- Barley, canola, rapeseed, kale, rye, ryegrass, spring oats, triticale, forage radish and wheat may be used as cover crops.
- Farmers may mix any approved cover crop species. Cereal grain and forage mixes must be planted at a seeding rate of 60/40. The species with the earliest planting date determines the planting deadline. Mixes containing rye do not qualify for the \$10/acre rye incentive.
- All seed purchased for cover crops must be tested and labeled in accordance with Maryland Seed Law and Regulations.
- Seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have a minimum germination rate of 80 percent and have no more than 16 restricted noxious weeds per pound.
- Homegrown seed must be tested prior to planting for germination and noxious weeds by the Maryland State Seed Laboratory.
- Cost-share for seed testing is provided at 50 percent (up to \$15). The current year's seed tag for all purchased seed must be attached to the fall certification.
- Applicants must be in good standing with MACS and in compliance with nutrient management requirements.

## Traditional

### TRADITIONAL COVER CROPS

Traditional cover crops may not be harvested, but may be grazed or chopped for on-farm livestock forage after becoming well established. Kill-down/suppression may take place any time after March 1, 2015, but no later than June 1, 2015. Traditional cover crops qualify for add-on incentive payments if certain environmental guidelines are met.

- Base Payment:** \$45/acre with add-on incentives for using highly valued planting practices (*see payment chart below*)
- Acreage Cap:** None
- Manure Use:** Yes, in accordance with nutrient management requirements in the fall, however, no incentives are offered and certain restrictions apply.
- Certification with SCD:** Within one week of planting and no later than November 12, 2014.
- Killdown/Suppression:** Between March 1 and June 1, 2015

TRADITIONAL COVER CROPS PAYMENT OPTIONS	NO-TILL	CONVENTIONAL	BROADCAST WITH LIGHT, MINIMUM OR VERTICAL TILLAGE	AERIAL	BROADCAST STALK CHOP/ AERIAL GROUND
Base payment:	\$45/acre	\$45/acre	\$45/acre	\$50/acre	\$45/acre
Plant by October 1, <b>add:</b> or Plant by October 15, <b>add:</b>	\$20/acre \$10/acre	\$10/acre \$5/acre	\$10/acre \$5/acre	\$0/acre \$0/acre	\$0/acre \$0/acre
Plant fields where manure was used in spring, <b>add:</b>	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre
Plant in field with previous corn, tobacco or vegetable crop, <b>add:</b>	\$5/acre	\$5/acre	\$5/acre	\$5/acre	\$5/acre
Plant rye (no mixes), <b>add:</b>	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre
Farm located in targeted watershed, <b>add:</b>	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre
Maximum Payment Amount:	\$100/acre	\$90/acre	\$90/acre	\$85/acre	\$80/acre

## Harvest

### HARVESTED COVER CROPS

This program option is available to farmers who want to harvest their cover crops. Farmers should provide their best estimate of acres they plan to harvest on their applications.

- Payment:** \$25/acre (\$10/acre bonus if rye is planted exclusively as the cover crop)
- Acreage Cap:** None
- Fertilizer Application:** After March 1, 2015. Early fertilization at green up is prohibited.
- Certification with SCD:** Within one week of planting and no later than November 12, 2014.

The 2014-2015 Cover Crop Program is administered by the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program and funded by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund.